

How Come Smaller Yields Always Take Care Of Any Price Advance

By Monte Noelke

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Page 10

MERTZON — Livestock production has paced itself to fit the 1969 market advances. Pack any facet of range output and you will find that it has fallen off enough to absorb the higher quotations. Be it wool clips or calf crops, the story is the same: while the price has gone up, the yield has gone down.

This seems to be an irrevocable law of agricultural economics. One hombre stationed out on the western boundary of the Shortgrass Country claims that his sheep and cows are so affected by the boom time neurosis that they won't even graze in those parts of the pasture where spotted showers have brought up green pickings.

He told me he had one bunch of four-year-old ewes that were so determined to resist the new price structure, he feared the only way to get them bred was to start feeding. His view is that the old sisters are so stricken with the idea of the amount of dollars they could produce that they are determined to reject the advances of the rams.

In heavier rain belts, cattle are displaying similar traits. Every outfit has had, or still has, long-tailed calves that would make excellent snacks for predatory birds. No tests have been run on this year's milk production from mother cows, but judging from the condition of their offspring, the cows would have summered just about as well on the siftings from whirlwinds as they did on the scorched grasslands.

Late lambs have been a subject sad to discuss. Most of them have been so light that truckers have had to be careful when poking them with their walking sticks lest they plummet one of the little fellows clear over the top rails. The quick-pencil operators over in the Wool Capital have been sending out false cries about the lack of demand for heavy lambs. Nobody in these parts know what they mean, unless the sheep buying fraternity has joined the whiskey distillers and have started using a 4/5 measure instead of a full one.

You do have to hand it to those stockyards boys, however. Wrong-side-out kangaroo pouches can falter in Sydney and the graders are ready to apply the situation to livestock. A waver in the dressed market for unmatched camel humps in Cairo can put local dealers on the alert. They never miss a chance to take a shot at an upswing. There are no dumb livestock buyers; they don't last long enough, I'm sorry to say, for the folks around the markets to give them a nickname.

Winter is going to make matters worse. Once the news about high feed is confirmed, livestock prices will really start collapsing. Then, as the bankers' piped-in music boxes start playing such ditties as "Bye, Bye Blackbird," inhabitants of the rangelands will start looking for graceful ways to wither into nothing.

As many range experts as we have today, it looks like some smart kid would find a solution. Wouldn't it be great, for at least one year, to be able to peddle some extra pounds at a higher price?